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SUBJECT: IRELAND AND THE UN HRC: DARFUR IS THE HIGHEST
PRIORITY

REF: STATE 157283

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Jonathan Benton; Reasons 1.4 (B)
and (D).

¶1. (C) The Irish Government largely agrees with USG views on the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), but sees Darfur as the highest priority for the HRC's second session, according to Eamon MacAodha, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Counsellor for Human Rights, to whom Pol/Econ Section Chief delivered reftel demarche on September 25. MacAodha observed that Ireland, like other EU Member States, recognized the seriousness of the human rights situations in Burma and North Korea, the U.S. priorities for the HRC's second session. He added, however, that the scale of human rights violations in Darfur "would make it incredible" if the HRC did not address Sudan as the first order of business. (Foreign Minister Dermot Ahern visited Darfur and Khartoum in July and made Sudan the headline issue in his address to the UN General Assembly on September 26.) MacAodha cited the need to balance HRC country-specific actions against the push for consensus on the establishment of the HRC's framework of operations, another important objective for the second session. He anticipated that horse-trading on country-specific actions would be necessary to save a consensual approach to the framework. He also noted that the Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG) had fewer representatives on the HRC compared to the former Commission on Human Rights, another factor that constrained what WEOG members might be able to achieve in the second session.

¶2. (C) MacAodha pointed out that Ireland, like the United States, supported the proposed Universal Periodic Review and the preservation of Special Rapporteurs and country mandates. Ireland held that the Periodic Review should focus on technical cooperation and productive results, inviting NGO input but avoiding duplication of existing human rights monitoring mechanisms. MacAodha highlighted the need to determine Periodic Review procedures within the next twelve months, in order to leave enough time to review current HRC members whose terms would expire by that deadline. Ireland, he added, agreed with the U.S. view that an exclusive focus on Israel in the HRC's second session would be counterproductive. He also predicted that Ireland would wait until 2013, the next time it would hold the EU presidency, before seeking candidacy for the HRC.
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